

Observations on
Dysentery

By Powhatan B. Fendall
of Virginia

The Author of this Essay has given a very excellent
view of the subject which he has chosen for his
Inaugural Dissertation. It fully merits my ap-
probation, & I have consequently no question to
propose to him for further elucidation.

An Inaugural Dissertation
For
The Degree
of
Doctor of Medicine
submitted
to the examination of the
Reverend John Andrews D.D. Rector
~~Pro Tempore~~
The
Trustees & Medical Professors
of the
University of Pennsylvania.
by Powhatan B. Sindall
of Virginia.

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The subject that I have chosen for my Inaugural Dissertation, is that form of disease Nosologically called Dysentery.

This perhaps may, & will no doubt appear to some, a very trivial theme for an Essay upon such an important occasion; but when we come to advert to the fact, that this formidable disease prevails more or less, in almost every part of our country, we are naturally led to the conclusion that too much cannot be advanced, & that the inquiry of Physicians cannot be too sedulously devoted to an event, in which their own welfare, as well as that of the Public, is so intimately involved. —

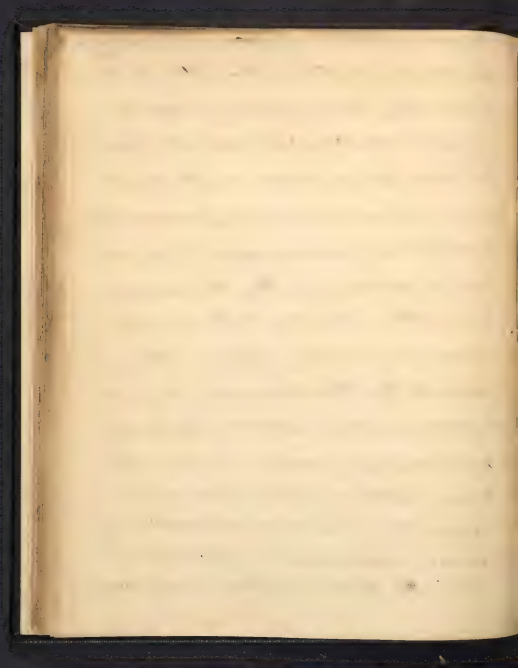
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In treating of this disease, I shall not attempt any thing new, nor shall I trouble you with minute details of all the different theories that have been from time to time, so ingeniously advanced; these are subjects into which men of Genius are too often allured, & in the pursuit of which, they are too often led astray by the immeasurable flights of imagination. The arguments & theory which I shall advance will I hope be entirely of a practical nature, they shall consist of such facts as I have collected during my attendance on the Medical Lectures in the University of Pennsylvania. —

In treating of this disease, Dysentery, I shall with my illustrious Preceptor

Dr Rush, consider it as an Intestinal
 form of Fever, - the arguments upon which
 I ground this opinion are as follows. It
 occurs at those times, & in those States of the
 atmosphere that are most favourable to the
 generation of Remittent & Intermittent Forms
 of fever together with Diarrhoea, Bilious
 Colic, & Cholera Morbus. It assumes a mild,
 inflammatory, or Malignant aspect accord-
 ing to the causes that produce it, and other
 circumstances. - Since the time of Dr
 Sydenham, this form of disease has been
 viewed as a *Febris Introversa*, whether this
 view of the subject be correct I will not
 undertake to determine, as it shall be
 my chief object ^{to avoid} speculation. That other

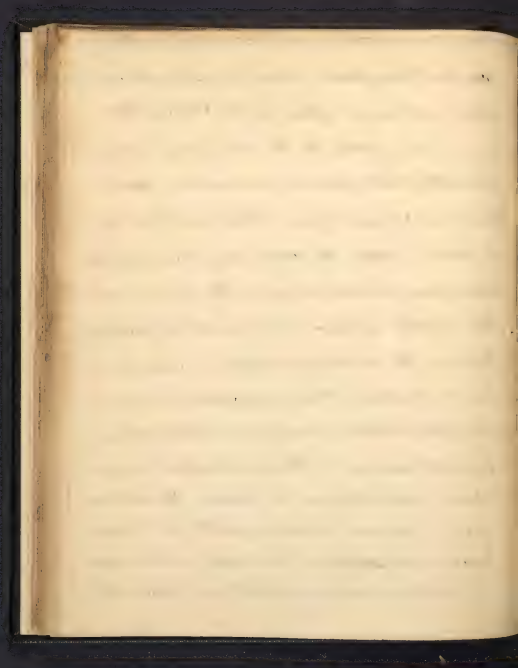
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diseases are sometimes translated to the
Alimentary Canal producing Dysentery.
cannot be doubted, but such is the fact;
that every form of disease, in attacking the
Animal frame, invariably fixes upon that
part, that is most predisposed to take on
morbid excitement. Now the causes in-
ducing the Dysentery & the mode of its
appearance at least affords us strong ar-
guments that the Alimentary Canal is
the part peculiarly acted on by the re-
mote & exciting causes. In short the
many instances of this form of Fever
being produced by an over proportion of
exercise, a full meal, or a glass of wine
& from the discharge of blood & other con-



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disease, hence the frequency of Dysentery & other inflammatory diseases in the autumn. Particularly at those times when warm days succeed to cold & damp nights, & when the heat of the body has been suddenly abstracted by the shifting of the wind from the south, or north east point of the Compass. - These sources of Dysentery occur every year in some part of the United States, & should never be overlooked by the skilful Physician, as they serve to guide him in his practice, & to enable him to attack the disease in its forming state. -

I have thus thought proper to make a few observations by way of introduction - From the view I have taken, you will re-



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dily perceive I am a strong advocate for the
unity of disease, I repeat again, I believe that
there is but one predisposing cause of Dysen-
tery, & that is debility, but one exciting cause,
& that is Stimulus. All ordinary fever being
seated in the bloodvessels, it follows of course
that all those affections we call Dysentery,
Fleurisy &c. are symptomatic only of an Ori-
ginal & primary disease in the Lymphatic
system. The truth of this proposition is obvious
from the above local affections succeeding pri-
mary fever, & from their alternating so fre-
quently with each other. —

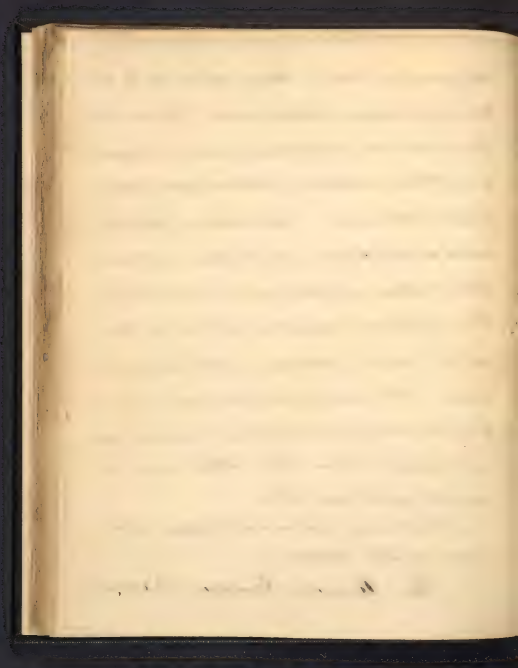
I shall now endeavour to speak of the
causes of this disease.

The Remote Causes of Dysentery



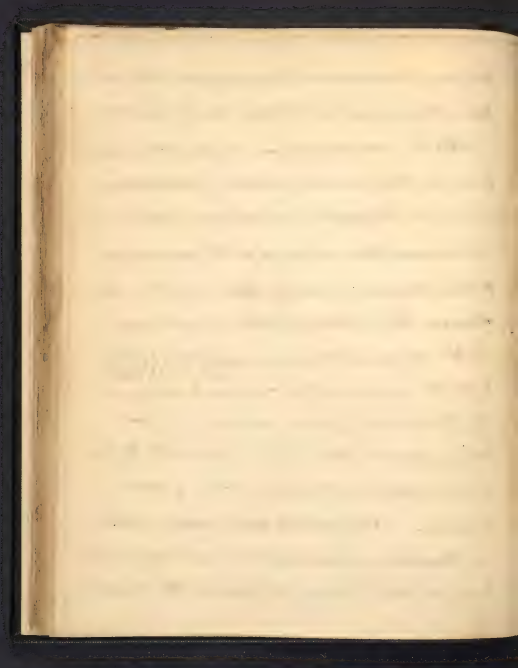
are very numerous, & various in their nature, some of which I shall briefly mention.

Heat & Miasmata in conjunction, appear to be the chief remote causes of this disease. When the atmosphere is excessively heated, & at the same time charged with noxious particles, proceeding chiefly from vegetable substances, the secretion of bile as well as its excretion is generally increased, & this together with its accumulated acrimony acting on the alimentary Canal, induces in that part a morbid state highly favourable to irregular action on the application of exciting powers. A vegetable diet frequently induces Dysentery, probably it is not sufficiently tonic & stimulating to preserve the natural

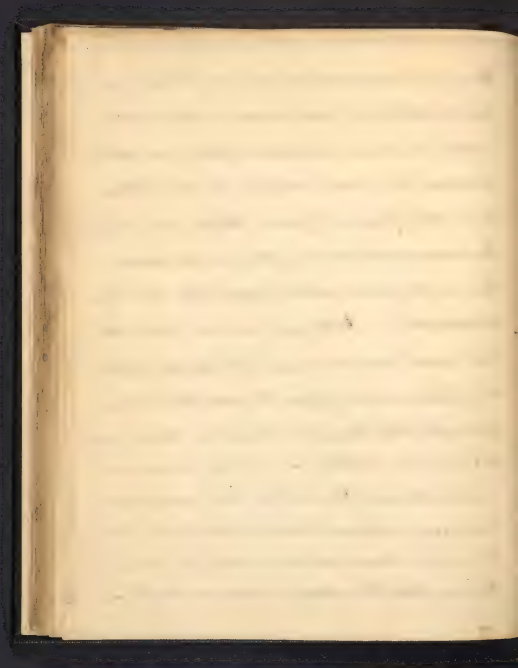


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None of the Alimentary Canal, & hence gives rise to debility. Fresh animal after an individual has been accustomed to live on salted animal food, has a similar tendency to induce this form of Fever. Cold should also be enumerated among the remote causes, this acts by accumulating excitability & checking perspiration. - Contagion has been believed the most usual remote cause of Dysentery, that the effluvia arising from the excretions & more especially the Faeces of a Dysenteric patient have acted as an exciting cause of this disease will not be denied, but whether the Dysentery is a contagious disease I will not undertake to determine. Many instances might be adduced to prove that this disease depends chiefly on



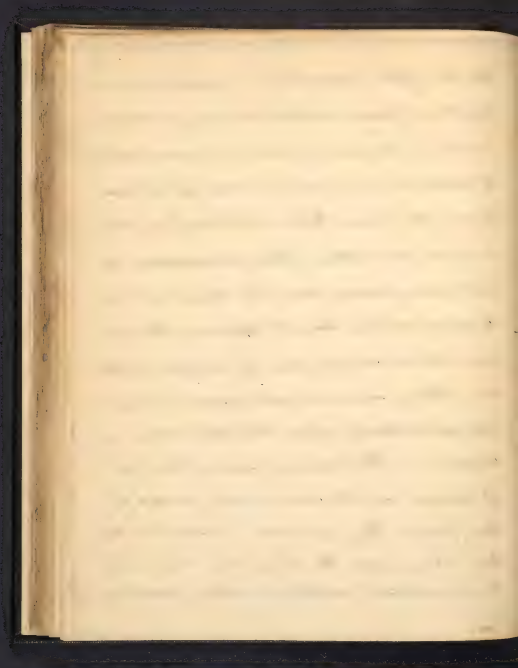
the State of the Atmosphere as respects its temperature, & foreign matters it may accidentally contain. The many instances of persons breathing the same air, living on the same Food, & swallowing the same kind of drinks from a similarity in the nature of their constitutions, does not by any means prove the disease to be contagious. neither does its ~~prevailing~~ spreading Families prove that it is propagated by contagion, for the same thing occurs in intermittent Fevers, & who will dare to assert that the latter is contagious. - The exciting causes of this form of disease are the usual exciting causes of other forms - They are such as act on the system & increase the frequency & force of the circulation without acting peculiarly



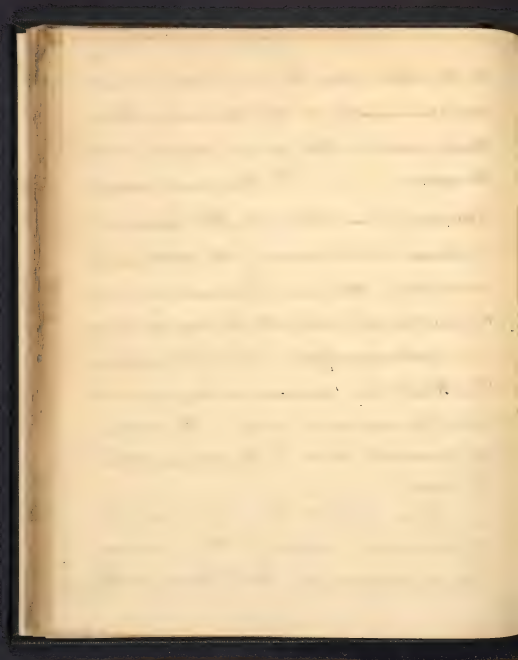
on the alimentary canal; & such as act
more immediately on the alimentary canal
thereby exciting their morbid influence over
the system. — The Proximate cause of

Dysentery was believed by Dr Cullen to
be Spasm — that spasms of the intestines do
accompany this form of disease will not
be doubted, but they sh^d be considered as
one of its symptoms & not its cause —
Dr. Rush has pronounced morbid action
to be the proximate cause. — He considers
the proximate cause & the disease to be
the same. —

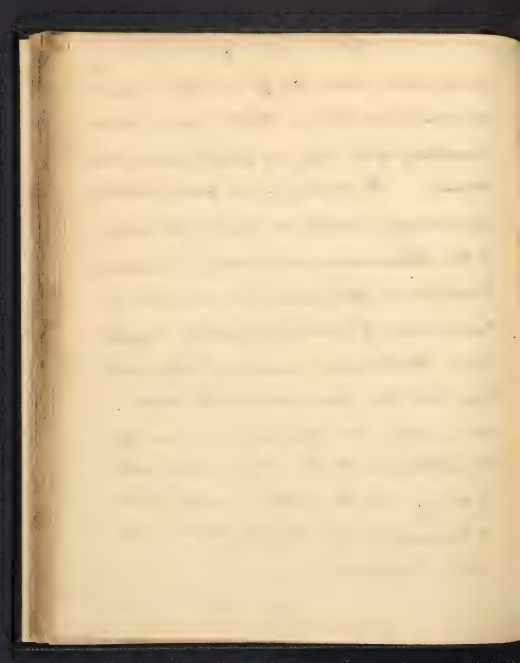
Here I finish the remote, exciting
& proximate causes of this disease
I must acknowledge that I have omitted



many, but I hope the few I have enumerated will evince that I have a common knowledge of the sources which produce the disease. The writer is not ashamed to confess himself unable to account for many of the Phenomena in the science of medicine. The subject is still involved in much doubt & intricacy, & it is only by study & application that we can surmount these obstacles; let then those prosecute the subject, whose active & cultivated minds, are happily blessed with the divine prerogative of diving into the hidden recesses of nature & triumphantly dragging truth into light & existence. —



Symptoms. The Dysentery is a disease in which the patient has frequent stools, accompanied with much griping, & followed by Tenesmus. The stools though frequent are generally in small quantities & the matter voided is chiefly mucus - sometimes mixed with blood. There is at the same time a suppression of the natural *Flores*, & when the patient does discharge his *Flores*, it is generally of a compacted nature. The times at which this disease is most liable to occur is in the summer & Autumn; at the same time with Autumnal Intermittents & remitting fevers; & with these it is sometimes blended. This disease sometimes comes on with a cold shivering, & then

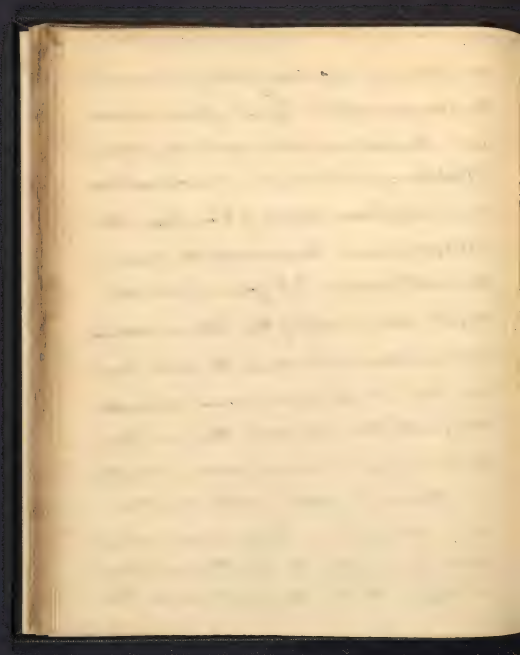


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symptoms of dysentery, but most commonly
the symptoms of the ²Topical affection appear
first - The belly is costive with some degree
of flatulency in the bowels - Sometimes, though
more rarely some degree of Diarrhoea is the
first appearance. In most cases the disease be-
gins with griping, & frequent inclination
to go to stool, indulging this, little is voided; but
as time attends it, by degrees the stools become
more frequent, the griping more considerable.
Along with these symptoms there is a loss of
appetite, & frequent sickness, nausea & vomiting,
also affecting the patient at the same time.
There is always more or less of pyrexia present,
which assumes either the remittent or intermit-
tent type. As the Dysentery advances, the

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introduction of the subject. It contains a history of the
science of the mind, and a description of the various
branches of the science. It also contains a list of the
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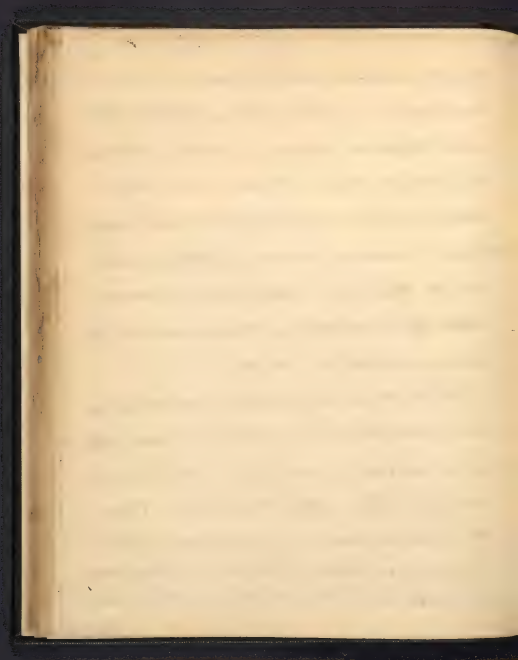
symptoms enumerated increase in violence, unless they be quickly subdued by the skill of the Physician & powers of medicine, the last & most fatal stage will soon arrive. This is attended with a small & frequent pulse, black tongue, sometimes a discharge of black matter from the stomach, constant hiccup, sometimes a total loss of sensibility, extreme weakness, cold extremities, & finally Death.

The matter discharged from the intestines varies in its appearance, consistence, & nature. It is sometimes discharged in the form of balls, of a firm yellow consistence. When the Dysentery commences with costiveness, this is a common result, & the pain in these cases is much more violent than in other cases



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when this form of disease commences with laxity of the bowels, it is followed by a more immediate intestinal discharge. Sometimes the *Feces* are fluid & intimately mixed with mucus, or streaked with blood. Sometimes there is a profuse discharge of mucus, unaccompanied with either *Feces* or blood. Sometimes a discharge of gummy blood devoid of both mucus & *Feces*. Sometimes there is apparently a membranous substance discharged which has been taken for a part of the villous coat of the intestines, but upon examination appears to be nothing more than inspissated lymph or mucus. — I shall conclude this part of the subject with the morbid appearances of the intestines after death. — The following circumstances have been observed by Physicians



17.
on dissection. Inflammation, Puscles, Gangrene, natural or no marks of inflammation

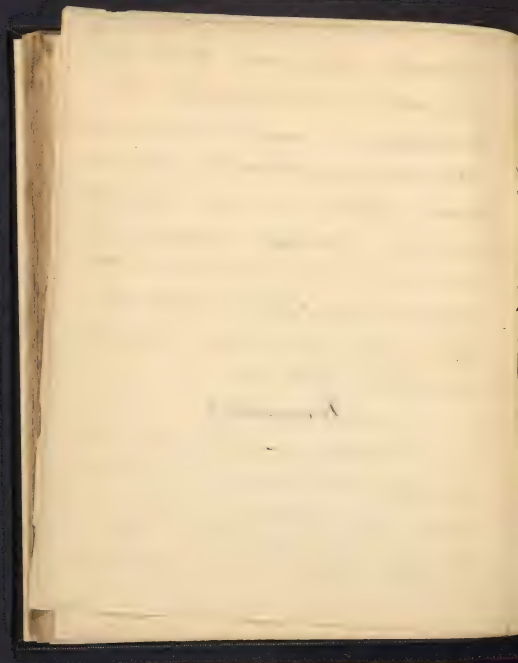
The last appearance may be considered as an action transcending the inflammatory grade or point. Did time permit me, I might offer remarks on all the different appearances of the intestines, but as I have but little time allotted me to prepare my dissertation, I must pass over the subject for the present, & proceed in the next place to the cure.

Remedies.

In establishing a method of cure it will be necessary to pay attention to the State of the system, & nature of the disease, as modified by the causes inducing it, & the constitution of the Patient. When the disease is attended

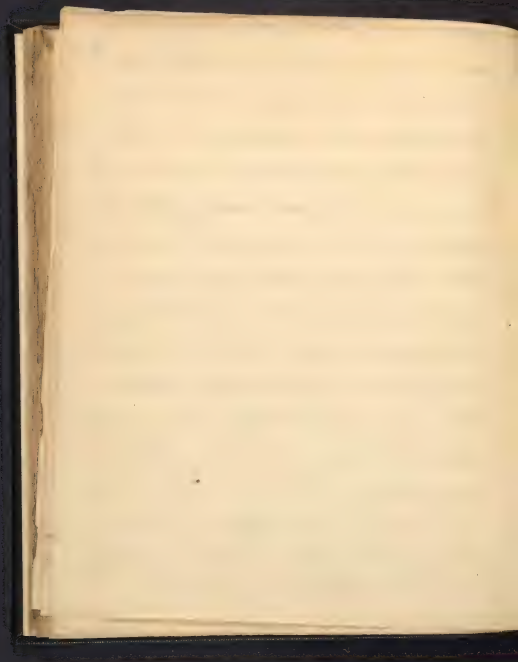


with violent inflammatory action, & when followed immediately after its commencement by a morbid pulse, bloodletting under such circumstances should always be advised. The many painful symptoms attending this form of Fever, as Tormina, Tenesmus, & discharge of blood, seem to derive their degree of violence from the grade of irregular action prevailing in the sanguiferous system, & are more instantaneously removed by bloodletting, than by any other means we can employ. The quantity of blood to be drawn at one time, or the frequency of repetition in such cases must be entirely at the discretion of the Physician, who by attending to the state of the system will find it not very difficult to determine. But

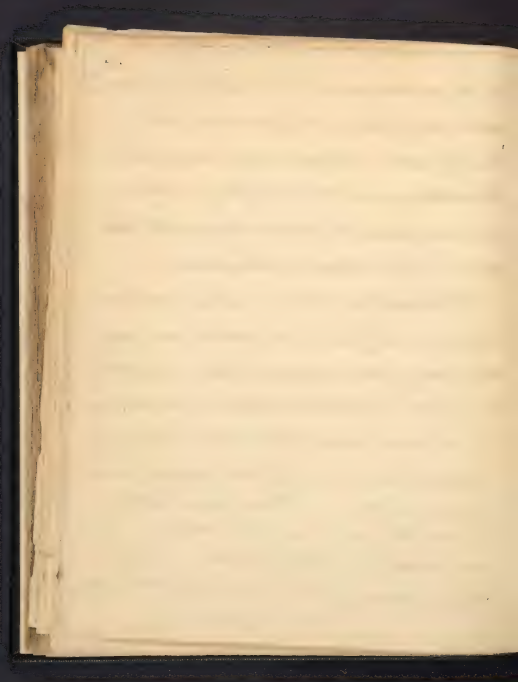


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in the mildest grade of this form of disease,
when very little if any deviation from a
healthy action is discoverable in the pulse,
bloodletting will be unnecessary; & the mor-
bid symptoms be relieved by a gentle Cathar-
tic, or a few drops of Laudanum.

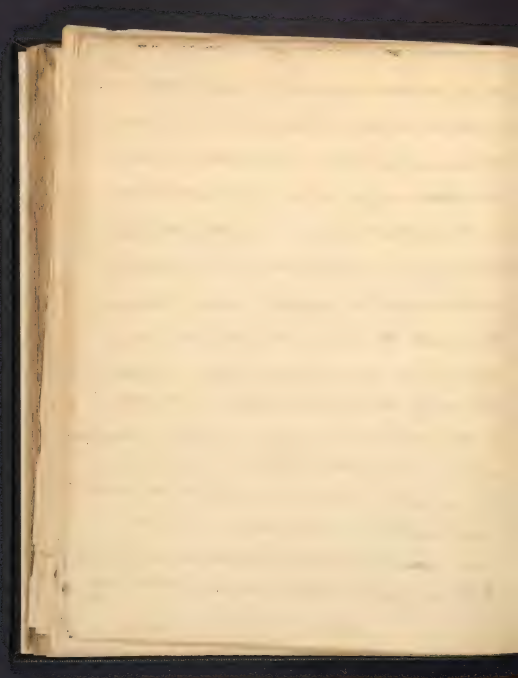
The Dysentery sometimes appears under so
malignant a form as to prohibit not only
bloodletting, but every other form of depletion,
& in which the sedative effect of a simple purge
has induced death. Here Bark, Laudanum,
& Cordial drinks are essentially necessary to sup-
port the system. It sometimes happens
that the Stomach is very much deranged, as
manifested by loathing of food, nausea,
bilious vomiting &c. here it has been cus-



to have recourse to Vomits, & they will
 no doubt be found highly useful, but when
 the natural functions of the Stomach are
 but little impaired, as is frequently the case
 in the mildest states of Dysentery, they appear
 to be injurious, for the Stomach is disposed by
 emetics to put on irregular action, & to dyspa-
 thize with the rest of the Alimentary Canal.
 I might go on & enumerate all the circumstances
 that render the exhibition of certain medicines
 in this disease pernicious & improper. I might
 indulge myself still farther, I might go on
 & even explain the operation of all the medi-
 cines exhibited in this disease; but such a
 view would far exceed the limits prescribed
 to the subject; I shall therefore content my-
 self.



self by mentioning a few of the most important medicines, & some circumstances to be observed in their administration. It is very rarely indeed that Cathartics may not be advantageously used in Dysentery. They are peculiarly well adapted to its removal, by compelling the intestines to throw off a vast accumulation ofordes & thereby relieve themselves from a constant & painful source of irritation. Those Cathartics that procure sufficient evacuation without acting powerfully on the intestines, which are at this time in a highly excitable state, have been employed with the greatest advantage. - The following have been found useful. Glauber's Salts, Castor Oil, Rhubarb & Calomel. The Rhubarb



should never be given in the commencement of Dysentery, as it possesses astringent & Tonic qualities, & would have a consequent tendency to increase the disease. - When the Dysentery assumes a highly inflammatory grade, & powerful means are requisite to check its rapid progress, Calomel has been, & still may be used with infinite advantage. -

We come in the next place to make a few observations on the use of Sudorifics in Dysentery. When the disease has a tendency to pass off by the skin, sudorifics in such cases may be used with evident good effect - Ipecacuanha for this purpose has been recommended in small doses, so as to keep up gentle Diaphoresis

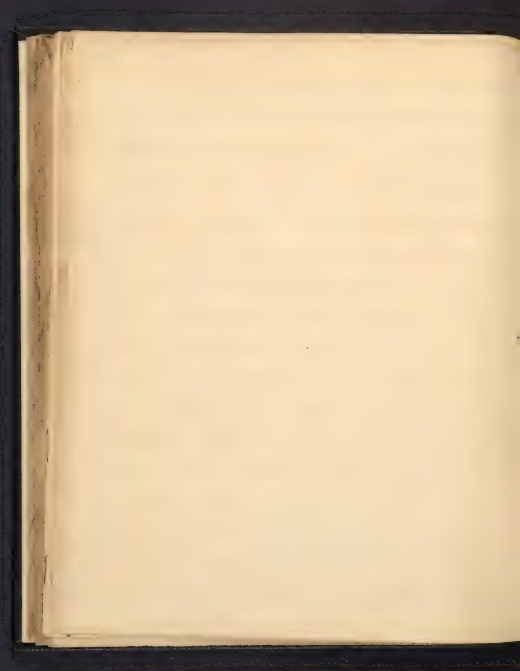


8 gr. Ipecac: 4 of Opium & Crota 24 grs made into 8 powders, one to be taken 3 or 4 times a day, has been used with good effect by Professor Watson. For the purpose of relieving pain by cleansing the bowels, & blunting the acrimony of the accumulatedordes, demulcents & mucilaginous drinks should be plentifully used. And when the violent inflammatory symptoms run high, & when the spasms of the intestines are frequent & violent, injections should be administered. They should be of the mildest kind such as Flaxseed Oa, Marsh, Sweet Oil, &c but when the disease put on a fever of the Malignant nature, the injections should be powerfully stimulating, as Laudanum combined with Marsh, Barley water or Sweet Oil & Laudanum form an



injection that seldom fails to remove the most distressing abdominal pains. After the inflammatory symptoms have been subdued, or when the disease appears under so malignant a form as to render depletion improper, Opium should be given; if the stomach be too weak to bear them, Laudanum should be thrown up the rectum.

Blisters in some stages of this disease have acted like a charm, probably they prove serviceable by causing a translation of morbid excitement from one part of the system to another. Before using them the most strict attention should be paid to the grade of morbid action in the system; they should be applied to the wrists & ankles in pre-



ference to the abdomen, they prove equally serviceable, & are attended with fewer distressing consequences. - In cases of extreme debility, either from the long continuance, or the malignancy of its nature, blisters & Cataplasms are indispensably necessary, - Here Bark & Wine should be administered freely. - When the Dysentery takes the Intermittent type, or when the accompanying pains have a periodical occurrence, Bark alone may be given with peculiar advantage. - - - The acute Dysentery sometimes runs into the Chronic state, in the treatment of which we should be governed by the state of system, as to what medicines should be used. The tonic & Stimu-



relating plan is pretty generally the proper one, but when the Tonics & Stimulants fail a salivation sh^d be resorted to. — The acute Dysentery likewise runs into other forms of disease, such as Typhus or low state of Fever — in this case the Patient sh^d be supported by Stimulants, such as Laudanum, Cordial aliments & drinks. —

I have at length finished my Essay on this important subject. I have no other apology to offer for its errors & imperfections, than my age & limited experience. The Science of Medicine is truly delightful & grand; to you the best, overwhelmed in misery, by sacred Friendships gentle though accumulated Curses, is certainly one of

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The sweetest callings of social man. —
To do this shall constitute my chief de-
light for the time to come. —

With these observations accept Gen-
tlemen, Professors in the University, of
Pennsylvania, collectively & individually,
the best wishes of a sincere Friend. —

Pawhatan B. Lindall.

